

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 08009 160956Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 8009

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, CVIS, CASC
SUBJ: GROC ACCEPTANCE OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

REF (A) TAIPEI 1497 (B) BANGKOK 7323 (C) STATE 66783
(D) 77 BANGKOK 33534

1. CHINA AIRLINES CHIEF OF TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WU MING-YEN CALLED ON THE REFUGEE SECTION MARCH 15. WU SAID TAIPEI HAD INSTRUCTED HIM TO REQUEST MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SIX BOAT CASE REFUGEES WHOM EMBASSY TAIPEI HAD IDENTIFIED FOR THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. (REF D).

2. WE EXPLAINED THAT WHILE ALL SIX HAD EITHER BEEN ACCEPTED BY OR DEPARTED FOR THE UNITED STATES OR AUSTRALIA, THESE REFUGEES WERE REPRESENTATIVE OF A MUCH LARGER NUMBER OF PEOPLE, MAINLY IN THE LAND CAMPS, WITH RELATIVES OR OTHER TIES TO TAIWAN. WE PROVIDED WU WITH FILES ON 14 FAMILIES CURRENTLY IN THE NONGKHAI CAMP, AND DISCUSSED THE CASES OF THREE INDIVIDUALS WHO FLED THE PRC VIA INDOCHINA. WE NOTED THAT WE HAD INSTRUCTED REFUGEE SECTION VOLUNTARY AGENCY PERSONNEL TO IDENTIFY REFUGEES WHO MIGHT WANT TO RESETTLE IN TAIWAN, AND REPEATED OUR EARLIER OFFER TO ASSIST THE GROC THROUGH VISA FALCON CHECKS.

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3. WU SAID THAT SOME LAND CAMP REFUGEES HAD ALREADY SENT RESETTLEMENT APPLICATIONS TO CHINA AIR LINES, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE MOST OF THE NAMES WE PROVIDED HIM WITH. WHILE HIS OFFICE USUALLY REQUIRES A REFUGEE TO APPLY IN PERSON TO CHINA AIR LINES IN BANGKOK, HE WOULD FORWARD THE CASES WE PRESENTED TO TAIPEI. HE WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE HE PERSONALLY

EMPATHIZED WITH THE REFUGEES' PLIGHT, HIS GOVERNMENT WAS STILL RELUCTANT TO APPROVE RESETTLEMENT REQUESTS. WU ONCE AGAIN CITED - AS THE MAIN REASONS FOR TAIPEI'S CURRENT REFUGEE POLICY - GROC SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS AND SENSITIVITIES TO THE FEELINGS OF HONG KONG REFUGEES WHO ARE REQUIRED TO LIVE IN A FREE WORLD COUNTRY FOR 5 YEARS BEFORE THEY ARE ELIGIBLE FOR RESETTLEMENT. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOME CHANGE BECAUSE OF CERTAIN "PRESSURES" IN TAIPEI. WE ASKED WU TO ADVISE US OF ANY ACTION TAIPEI TAKES ON THE CASES WE PRESENTED.

4. WU ALSO SAID THAT GROC AUTHORITIES WERE DISCUSSING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS IN BANGKOK THE RESUMPTION OF RED CROSS FLIGHTS FROM SAIGON TO BRING OUT OVER 200 CHINESE WHOM TAIWAN HAS ALREADY APPROVED FOR RESETTLEMENT THERE.

5. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTIONS, WU SAID THAT IT NORMALLY TOOK TWO WEEKS TO GET PAPERWORK TO AND FROM TAIWAN. DECISIONS ON REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT WERE FURTHER DELAYED BECAUSE REFUGEE MATTERS HAD TO BE REFERRED TO THE OVERSEAS CHINESE AFFAIRS COMMISSION.

6. COMMENT: EVEN IF TAIPEI CHANGES ITS CURRENT POLICY AND ONCE AGAIN ACCEPTS INDOCHINESE REFUGEES, WE DOUBT THAT THE GROC WILL BE ABLE TO ACT IN A TIMELY ENOUGH MANNER TO EFFECTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO BOAT CASE RESETTLEMENT FROM THAILAND. CHINA AIRLINES REPRESENTATIVES CAN NEITHER DEAL OPENLY WITH THE UN NOR TRAVEL FREELY ABOUT THAILAND; AND BOAT CASE REFUGEES CAN'T LEAVE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CAMPS. THE GROC, HOWEVER, COULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE RESETTLEMENT OF SEVERAL HUNDRED LAND CAMP REFUGEE FAMILIES WITH FAMILY, WORK-RELATED, OR EDUCATION TIES TO TAIWAN. THESE PEOPLE USUALLY DO NOT QUALIFY FOR RESETTLEMENT UNDER ANY THIRD COUNTRY PROGRAM AND TIMING IS NOT THE CRITICAL FACTOR IN RESETTLEMENT. IF THE GROC IS WILLING TO ACCEPT THESE REFUGEES, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO INCLUDE IN OUR INLAND PRE-SCREENING THE IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR THE GROC. WE WILL MEANWHILE INFORM WU OF ANY BOAT CASE REFUGEES WITH CLOSE RELATIVES ON TAIWAN. WHITEHOUSE

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